

plain and unideal a character, that the niggardly necessity of the times will be better demonstrated by this evidence of the want of encouragement, than by any other argument.

Within not many years, Parisian architects seem rivaling each other in the splendour of the houses and hotels they have constructed at the bidding of private enterprise. Whole quarters have arisen, *not en masse*, as with us, but house after house, — each proprietor, anxious to make the most of his bit of land, and give as much of variety, singularity, or richness of ornament as possible to his hotel. The interior corresponds with the exterior in the getting up. Painting and gilding extend from the very *porte-cochère* to the sixth story, covering, frequently, both walls and ceilings, and proving that the art of interior decoration is keeping pace with exterior ornamentation.

This luxury of modern buildings has been raised against by some as excessive, and indicative of approaching corruption and degeneracy in a people who give encouragement to it. The accusation, however, is preposterous, and as totally different from the facts, as applicable to the present time, as it can be. The luxury of the past was rather the luxury of a few, who, monopolizing the wealth and resources of the community, squandered it in excesses of every kind; and, though encouraging art and artists to a certain extent, were, by the unproductiveness of their extravagance and the wasting of the fruits of labour, bringing about that degeneracy of which their luxury was a forerunner. The luxury of the present, on the contrary, is the luxury of a greater mass, who, having a fairer share in the productions of industry, and having obtained security for the enjoyment and employment of their acquired wealth, lay it out ever productively, and give encouragement at the same time to art and artists. This luxury, then, is not an offspring of vice, but a necessary result of a more general prosperity, coupled with an increased taste for the beautiful, and an ardent desire for improvement.

While we admire many of the fine old aristocratic hotels with which this city abounds—while we admit that they have noble looking entrances, spacious courtyards, splendid and roomy apartments, we must, however, confess that few present much of architectural beauty or ornament worthy of notice. They have lofty doors and lofty windows which give a certain air of grandeur, but the plain plastered exterior of the majority, renovated occasionally with a coating of whitewash, can bear no comparison with the richly-ornamented exteriors of modern dwellings. Nor can the amount of encouragement given by their owners, lavished perhaps by almost a whole class, upon a few pet artists, be compared with the advantages to art in general and artists which arise from the prosperity of an intelligent and cultivated middle class.

These ancient mansions of the nobility of France have two things which speak in their favour, and strike the observer at first sight,—space exteriorly; and room and height interiorly. In these respects, modern hotels are at a disadvantage; the value of land has increased so immensely, that the most must be made of it, and consequently floor is reared above floor, and the courts narrowed to the smallest possible space, consistent with the wants of the “locataires.” Elegance, yes, and comfort, richness and convenience, may be found united in these modern houses, as much, if not more, than in those of any other nation. The most splendid furniture, the richest carpets, hangings of silk and satin, or velvet—in short, every thing that can tend to comfort, gratify the imagination or the taste, in bronze, candelabras, clocks, &c., are to be found in the truly French apartment. But as there are perhaps six stories to the hotel, and every proprietor is desirous of having as many families as possible around his court, and these respectable and payable, modern rooms are for the most part extremely limited both as to size and height. Great fortunes having disappeared, the stately first floor of former days is nowhere to be seen in the new quarters. The smaller fortunes then were satisfied with the second or the *rez-de-chaussée*—now however, the greater equality of circumstances demands a corresponding equality of habitation; and hence three, four, and even five floors in some houses have scarcely a difference of height or internal commodiousness between them.

These changes in the disposition of houses are extremely interesting, as characteristic of a corresponding change in the circumstances of a people. On this account we take note of them, and think it well worth while to draw some comparison between them, to shew the corresponding advantage to architectural development, which the improved fortunes and taste of the middle class, have called forth.

If we cannot so often look for the splendid residences of former times on which to engage the talents of a few great artists, we have, in compensation, a great many more of a different class to employ a greater number, and demanding a not inconsiderable share of talent. Take any one almost of the modern hotels, and place it side by side with one of the stately palaces of the Faubourg St. Germain: it will eclipse it altogether in splendour—the eye will wander from the dull and spacious building to fix itself in admiration on the elaborate workmanship displayed in the rich and varied ornaments of the modern building. Enter the *porte-cochère*, it is quite as lofty and infinitely more rich than the other; ascend the staircase, and you find marble and mahogany, and painting and gilding, in as great, if not greater profusion; the difference is, that the one is a private, the other a public staircase.

The number of ancient hotels really deserving of attention, in an architectural point of view, is really very limited; when we have named the palace of the Condés, of the Contis, the Hotel d'Osmond, that of the De la Rochefoucaults, and a few others in the Rue de Varenne, Rue de Lille, and adjacent streets, we have said enough—the majority are more curious than beautiful, more spacious than elegant. Turn from these to the splendid houses built by M. Cremieux, in the avenue of the Champs Elysées; to the Maison Dorée, as it has been styled on the Boulevard, at the end of the Rue Lafitte; to the new streets in the vicinity of the Rouen railway station; to the splendid buildings along various portions of the Boulevards—the Place St. George, —the quartier Notre Dame de Lorette; and to hundreds of others equally worthy of examination—and it must be confessed that there is a beauty and variety of design, and an amount of artistic skill, bestowed on their embellishment, which can find no equal in former times.

A few hotels on a grand scale have been constructed latterly, but few they are; for there is a vast difference between building a splendid house to live in oneself, and building one which is to make an abundant return for the money laid out upon it. We might notice the hotel lately finished near the *rend-point* in the Champ-Elysées, and now inhabited by Madame Le Hon, whose husband was formerly ambassador from Belgium to the Tuileries. Nothing can exceed the magnificence of the interior, or the richness of the decoration and furnishing: we question whether its equal can be found in Paris. Higher up, on the same side, is an elegant building, recently finished, built, we think, by the Duke de Lauriston, or a member of his family. It is almost too quiet-looking, and wants something to relieve it. In the Cours la Reine are two beautiful hotels in course of termination; one has been sold, and the other is announced for sale, the proprietors not having calculated well their expenses. A gentleman named Tourette is the constructor of one of them: there is much of taste and novelty displayed in it. The house consists of a centre and two wings, each of which is ornamented with four Corinthian columns: it has a window between each pair of columns, and the entablatures are surmounted with groups representing the seasons. There are but two figures in each group, a female and child; but their positions are well varied, and there is much to praise in the distribution of the accessories: they are from the atelier of a sculptor of considerable note. Within a few steps is the well known house, called that of “François I^{er},” which was brought from Moret by Colonel Brack, and reconstructed, stone by stone, on its present site, at the Restoration. This house has given the name to the quarter. A large private hotel, baring much of the style and loftiness of the old mansions, is terminating in the Rue Marbourg: it is too good for the situation. Another, the façade of which is of great simplicity and elegance, is nearly finished, in the Avenue d'Antin. From the extent of the building at the back, it is evidently intended for the habitation of several families.

We have thus far entered into a consideration of the encouragement given to architecture and exterior embellishment in the great majority of constructions rising in the best quarters of the town, because the present may be regarded as a new epoch in ornamental building, interesting to all lovers of art, as well as pleasing, and indicative of the great diffusion of wealth and the spirit and taste of the educated classes. If we look to the character of the buildings destined for the habitations of the lower classes, we find them necessarily plainer in style and cheaper in construction. For the beautiful freestones found in various parts of the neighbourhood, and which adds so much to the strength and superiority of the better class of houses, an inferior and softer stone is used in running up the walls, coated with plaster to imitate stone. It averages about 60 francs a load. The back part of these dwellings are lightly built of little more than mere lath and plaster; and but for the interference of the authorities, speculation would have prompted to the erection of houses of a very unstable description.

The greatest mass of buildings, as we have already remarked, is going on in the neighbourhood of railway stations. There seems to be a rage for that of the St. Germain and Versailles line in particular. This has been the one longest established: nearest to the fashionable part of the town, and situated on a gentle declivity, it has, therefore, very naturally attracted towards it that class of inhabitants who had most to gain or enjoy by its vicinity. The establishment of other lines is already producing its effect; time alone is wanting to turn a dreary open waste to one of animation, newness, and prosperity. This is fast accomplishing since the opening of the Northern Railroad, where almost every portion of an immense unprofitable space is now laid out in streets, or walled in.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUILDINGS ON PRINCIPLE OF CENTRAL INSPECTION.

THE LATE SIR SAMUEL BENTHAM.

THE mode of constructing buildings so as to afford a central point of observation, from which the head of the establishment may inspect, without the necessity of moving, all the essential branches of service, having been adopted by the late Penitentiary Congress, it may be of use to architects and others concerned in the erection of buildings other than, as well as, prisons, to call attention to the great variety of structures to which the same principle of central inspection is applicable.

When the late Brigadier-general Sir Samuel Bentham was, in the year 1787, with his regiment at Cricheff, in White Russia, he, as a friend of Prince Potemkin's, undertook the management of his fabrics in that neighbourhood. Struck with the drawbacks to success by the miserable arrangement of the manufacturing buildings there, he was led to consider what form would be most suitable for an edifice as an extensive manufactory, and concluded that a central point of observation, from which the director of works could with facility inspect the whole of the persons employed, and the operations going on, would materially contribute to good order, to perfection of the works, and to economy. Pursuing the idea, he contrived a structure having a central chamber for offices, with rays diverging from it for workshops. The rays were of two stories, the central observatory but of one floor, but that of such a height, that being upon it, the inspector had full view over two floors of the rays, the floor of the lower workshop being below that of the observatory, the floor of the upper workshop above it.

Sir Samuel's elder brother, the late Jeremy Bentham, about this time was on a visit to him at Cricheff, and in a series of letters to a friend in England, described his brother Samuel's invention, giving it the name of “Panopticon, or the Inspection House.” These letters were published: the title-page, “Panopticon, or the Inspection House; containing the idea of a new principle of construction, applicable to any sort of establishment in which persons of any description are to be kept under inspection; and in particular to penitentiary houses, prisons, houses of industry,